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Testimony
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Lands
Committee on Resources
United States Houses of Representatives

Hearing on Senate 144 'Noxious Weed Control Act of 2003'
April 29, 2004

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) thanks the Chairman and Subcommittee for inviting our department to submit testimony with regard to Senate 144 the 'Noxious Weed Control Act of 2003.' The CDFA is the lead agency for noxious weed control in California and as such has maintained a vigorous and highly successful collaborative program to prevent, detect, eradicate and control noxious weeds for the past 100 years. This program, in close collaboration with the county agricultural commissioners and the United States Department of Agriculture, has fully eradicated 18 species of detrimental noxious weeds entirely from the state and has prevented the permanent establishment of over 20 more weeds, which are currently on the path to eradication. The emergence of weed management areas in the past five years as an extension and complement to formalized governmental programs has been an extremely positive development in weed control.

It is from this commitment and accumulated expertise that we can state that we are in full support of the goals and concepts of Senate 144 by Senator Craig the 'Noxious Weed Control Act of 2003.' California has just completed a five-year version of a pilot funding mechanism, which has provided \$5.4 million in cost-share support to weed management areas throughout the state. The success of California's Weed Management Area Program and that of many other western states provides proof that cost-share funding is a highly effective way of directly supporting local weed control efforts. Most importantly, the California program has leveraged local contributions to the weed management areas that matched state contributions by a ratio of 4 to 1.

Senate 144 would authorize funding which would build on the demonstrated success of weed management areas in California and allow these programs to flourish and grow.

Directly below are points where CDFA is in strong concurrence with the details and specifics in the Senate 144 Bill. After that are points where we have questions or concerns. Concluding this testimony is a brief report and description of California's Weed Management Area Program, which can be viewed as a tested, model funding mechanism, which can serve as evidence of what cost-share funding can achieve.

POINTS OF CONCURRENCE

- Maintain the funding level at \$100 million per year.
- Maintain the current definition of 'noxious weed' (from the Plant Protection Act of 2003).
- Maintain the restriction on funding to terrestrial weeds.
- Maintain the component for applied research.
- Maintain the requirement of landowner consent and voluntary nature of the program.

POINTS OF CONCERN

- It does not seem necessary to create a new federal program to administer this funding.
- The states would require an administrative reimbursement (limited to 10%) to prioritize and select weed management area projects, establish contracts, establish specific performance measures, and ensure accountability.
- It would be beneficial to add the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW) as additional consultants to implementation.

California's Weed Management Area Program

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Weed Management Area Program was formalized with the passage of California Assembly Bill 1168, Frusetta (Chapter 961, Statutes of 1999) and later extended by California Senate Bill 1740, Leslie (Chapter 315 Statutes of 2000). Both of these bills authorized the Noxious Weed Management Fund within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and allocated \$5.4 million funding.

- Since the year 1999, the number of formal weed management areas has gone from five to 45. Over 5,023 individuals have attended regular weed management area meetings throughout California. Local partnerships have been created among public agencies, private landowners, agriculturalists and conservationists.

The weed management area cost-share funding supplements existing budgets in local weed management collaborations and helps jumpstart weed management pilot projects. The local weed management area determines its priority weed targets based on local concerns and statewide priority lists. The weed management area also decides on priorities for individual projects, which treatment methodologies to use, and whether the weeds should be managed, contained or eradicated.

Weed management areas are not a set of individual county programs, but rather are a linked network of highly effective groups, which are working in cooperation to solve a rapidly spreading statewide problem, which does not recognize borders or fences. This is an action-oriented program, focusing on on-the-ground control. Although, mapping planning and education are critical to the long-term success of the weed management areas, these activities are secondary with respect to attacking high-priority weed infestations now.

These two pieces of legislation have provided an initial impetus and have given new hope to landowners and public land-holding agencies that have been losing economic and biological resources to the spread of noxious weeds. The bills have provided a total of \$5.4 million over a period of five years to local public and private partnerships to form local weed management areas and aggressively control high priority weed infestations. Weed management areas create a mechanism for landowners, land managers (private, city, county, state and federal), special districts, and the public to combine their actions to control noxious weed problems they hold in common. These are partnerships for a better environment.

The program was designed to achieve permanent and lasting results. Projects are carried out with clear objectives and are monitored to measure their success. The CDFA implements an intensive program to coordinate, train and evaluate weed management areas throughout the state. The CDFA Statewide Weed Management Area Coordinator works with CDFA district personnel to provide training in control methodology, monitoring, strategic planning, mapping, and weed education.

Program Results

- An estimated 129,000 landowners and citizens have participated in noxious and invasive weed education and technology transfer events statewide.
- Eighty percent of the funding has been dedicated directly to control measures resulting in the permanent eradication of 1,376 priority weed populations and also significant control of 80,204 acres of weeds throughout California.
- Since 2000, over \$4.2 million has been distributed to 45 weed management areas covering 53 counties. An estimated \$6,474,972 in direct funding match has been contributed by local government and outside grants. Additionally the state seed money has been matched locally by a total of \$10,476,232 of "in-kind" resources (donated equipment, volunteer labor or other services). This is an overall match ratio of approximately 4 to 1.

The Role of CDFA's Weed Management Area Program

- Foster the creation of weed management areas;
- Provide technical assistance in weed management area organization, grant writing, outreach, inventory, strategic planning and project implementation;
- Provide cost-share financial assistance;
- Encourage weed management areas to work together and avoid duplication of effort; and
- Ensure accountability and measure performance through project review.

Participants in Weed Management Areas

Collaboration is the foundation of the work conducted by weed management areas. Over 33 entities have participated in these groups, as follows:

Agencies and Groups that Participate in Weed Management Areas	
County Agricultural Commissioners	California Department of Transportation
University of California Cooperative Extension	California Department of Fish and Game
Resource Conservation Districts	Audubon Society
Natural Resource Conservation Service	Master Gardeners
County Farm Bureau	The Bureau of Land Management
Forestry industry	Public Works
California Native Plant Society	California Invasive Plant Council
California Department of Food and Agriculture	Utilities
California Department of Forestry	Bureau of Reclamation

Pest Control Representatives California Department of Parks and Recreation Cattlemen's Association Regional Water Quality Control Boards United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Park Service Departments of Water and Power Sierra Club	Schools Ranchers Farmers United States Army Corps of Engineers United States Forest Service Cities Several other non-profit organizations
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Outreach and Education Program Components

A successful weed control program requires widespread awareness of the problem among landowners and citizenry. On-the-ground control efforts must work in conjunction with vigorous education and awareness campaigns. So far, an estimated 129,000 landowners and citizens have been directly involved in noxious and invasive weed education events statewide.

The CDFA enhances these awareness campaigns by helping weed management area groups distribute outreach materials across the state. A Web site at www.cdfa.ca.gov/weedhome to catalog existing outreach materials was established to avoid duplicated efforts.

Selected outreach materials include:

Flyers and Brochures: Over 25 weed management areas have created a noxious weed brochure that highlights the main priority weeds for their county.

Control Methodology Handbooks: The Contra Costa/Alameda WMA created a 30-page yellow starthistle control handbook for private landowners.

Expo Displays: Professional and eye-catching expo displays produced by over 10 weed management areas present information about weed identification, the harmful impact of weeds, and mitigation efforts.

Public Weed Workshops: Public workshops, which can be technical in nature for treatment methodology, can also focus on the impacts of noxious weeds.

Weed Awareness Week: Many weed management areas invite their communities to participate in personal guided tours to give people a first-hand look at weed impacts.

Print Media Campaigns: Hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles featuring local weeds and weed management areas across the state.

Public Library Resources Center: Collections of weed resource materials, including books and videos, and a weed section at the local libraries for the benefit of the community.

Mapping and Inventory

The strategic approach to regional noxious weed management requires accurate information on where target weeds grow. For this reason, the CDFA provides weed management areas with guidance and training in weed survey and mapping. Computer-based mapping is crucial for strategic planning, project monitoring and outreach.

The CDFA staff have conducted weed mapping seminars as well as one-on-one trainings across the state on Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographical Information System (GIS). Many of the weed management areas have acquired GPS receivers to precisely locate weed infestations in rural areas and transfer the data to GIS computers.

The CDFA has also taken the lead in the formation of the California Weed Mapping Steering Committee, which has members from the California Department of Fish and Game, University of California, California Department of Pesticide Regulation, United States Department of Agriculture, seven county agriculture departments and many weed management areas. The Committee develops mapping standards, offers training, and identifies data gaps and resources.

The CDFA, along with the California Department of Transportation, county agricultural commissioners offices, and local weed management areas, have also formed a cooperative yellow starthistle mapping and assessment project on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. This project has resulted in the mapping of yellow starthistle at a high level of resolution and an eastern boundary of starthistle spread, called the "no spread line," has been established.

Immediately west of this boundary, a containment zone has been determined and key outlier populations have been identified. The eradication and control of yellow starthistle in these areas is a high priority among weed management areas.